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REPORT ON THE QUESTION OF THE BOUNDARY LINE BETWEEN CHINA AND BURMA

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CHOU EN-LAI

Premier and Foreign Minister

The question of the boundary line between China and Burma is an important question in the foreign relations of our country, a question in which our people are greatly interested. The government therefore deems it necessary to make a special report on this matter to the National People's Congress.

We have inherited from the past questions of undefined boundary lines between our country and many neighbouring countries, and the one between China and Burma has attracted public attention particularly. This is because of the prolonged disputes created by Britain over the boundary line between China and Burma when Burma was under British rule, and because in recent years the forces of imperialism have constantly used the boundary question between China and Burma to sow discord between the two countries in an attempt to create a tense situation.

Our government has consistently held that a fair and reasonable settlement of all outstanding questions between China and other countries should be sought through peaceful negotiation. The boundary question between China and Burma is of long standing as well as complicated; so from the moment our government began to tackle it, it has taken a careful attitude to seek, step by step and through suitable preparatory work, a settlement of the question.

During the years immediately after the founding of our state, our government was engrossed in a series of urgent, major tasks at home and in its relations with foreign countries, and was therefore unable at that time to make

comprehensive and systematic preparations for the settlement of the Sino-Burmese boundary question. However, since the Premiers of China and Burma proposed in the communique on their talks issued on December 12, 1954 that the question of the undefined boundary line between the two countries should be settled "at an appropriate time through normal diplomatic channels," our government has proceeded to make the necessary preparations for the settlement of the question. The various government departments concerned have, jointly with the provincial authorities of Yunnan, undertaken a systematic and detailed examination and study of relevant historical data and actual conditions.

In November 1955, just as the Chinese and the Burmese sides were respectively making active preparations for the settlement of the boundary question, an armed clash unfortunately occurred owing to misunderstanding between the outpost units of the two countries in the border region. This incident was properly dealt with through the joint efforts of both sides, but at the same time it made the governments of both countries realize the need for an early settlement of the boundary question between the two countries. Since the beginning of 1956 the Chinese and the Burmese Governments have entered into frequent contacts on the boundary question. In November of the same year, Chairman U Nu of the Burmese Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League came to Peking at our invitation to hold consultations with our government. In line with our foreign policy of peace and on the basis of the results of our

examination and study of the boundary question, our government made, through Chairman U Nu, to the Burmese Government a proposal about principles for the settling of the boundary question. The proposal received the approval of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress at its 50th meeting on November 5, 1956.

The greater part of the boundary line between China and Burma is fixed, but there are three sections regarding which outstanding issues remain to be settled. Our government made a proposal about principles on these three sections and held that the three-point proposal should be considered as an integrated whole. Let me now explain the contents of the proposal made by the government.

The first point concerns the section in the Kawa area. This section was explicitly provided for in the two treaties on the Sino-Burmese boundary line signed between China and Britain in 1894 and 1897 respectively. But as the related provisions are self-contradictory, this section was for long not demarcated. To create a *fait accompli*, Britain sent troops in the earlier part of 1934 to attack the areas of the Panhung and Panlao tribes and were met with heroic resistance from the Kawa people. This was the well-known "Panhung Incident." In 1941, taking advantage of the critical situation in which China was placed during the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression and using the closing of the Yunnan-Burma Road as a pressure measure, Britain effected, in an exchange of notes with the Kuomintang government on June 18, a demarcation in the Kawa area to her advantage. This was the so-called "1941 line." But since the Pacific war broke out soon afterwards, no markers were erected along the line. In the course of the discussion between the Chinese and Burmese Governments in 1956 on the boundary question, Burmese leaders indicated that they could understand the Chinese people's dissatisfaction with the 1941 line but, in view of the fact that this section of the boundary had been demarcated by an exchange of notes between the Chinese and the British Governments responsible at that time, they asked our government to recognize the line and to withdraw the Chinese troops from the area to the west of the 1941 line which they had entered in 1952 when chasing after remnant Kuomintang troops. It was the opinion of our government that on the question of boundary lines, demands made on the basis of formal treaties should be respected according to general international practice, but this by no means excluded the seeking by two friendly countries of

a settlement fair and reasonable for both sides through peaceful negotiation between their governments. In order to promote such a fair and reasonable settlement and to create a favourable atmosphere for it, our government in its proposal about principles to the Burmese Government expressed its preparedness to withdraw its troops from the area to the west of the 1941 line. At the same time, our government asked that, pending a final agreement on the question of the 1941 line and the setting up of boundary markers, Burmese troops should refrain from entering the area to the west of the 1941 line evacuated by the Chinese troops; however, the working personnel of the Burmese Government may enter this area.

The second point concerns the Meng-Mao triangular area, otherwise called the Namwan triangular area, situated at the junction of the Namwan River and the Shweli River and measuring about 250 square kilometres. This is Chinese territory, a fact which Britain also recognized in explicit terms in the treaty. But before the signing of the Sino-British treaty on Sino-Burmese boundary line in 1894, Britain, without obtaining China's consent, built by compulsion a highway through this area to join Bhamo with Namhkan. By the time China and Britain signed another treaty on the Sino-Burmese boundary line in 1897, Britain under the name of "perpetual lease" further secured jurisdiction over this piece of Chinese territory. Following her independence, Burma succeeded to the "perpetual lease" of the area. In its proposal about principles to the Burmese Government, our government pointed out that it would be inconsistent with the relations of equality and friendship now existing between China and Burma for Burma to continue the "perpetual lease" of a piece of Chinese territory. Our government expressed its readiness to negotiate with the Burmese Government so as to decide upon the concrete steps to abrogate the "perpetual lease" of the Meng-Mao triangular area.

The third point concerns the section to the north of the High Conical Peak. This section of the boundary line has never been delimited in the past. Britain continually created conflicts in this area and took the opportunity to expand its colonial territory. The most serious of such conflicts was the armed occupation of the Hpimaw area by the British in the early part of 1911. The "Hpimaw Incident" aroused the indignation of the whole Chinese people and protest movements spread with gathering force through all parts of China. Under such circumstances, the British

Government could not but acknowledge formally in its note dated April 10, 1911 to the then Chinese Government that the villages of the Hpimaw, Kangfang and Gawlum area belong to China, but it continued unreasonably to occupy this area. On the basis of the results obtained from an examination and study of the historical facts and actual conditions, our government made to the Burmese Government the following proposal concerning the demarcation of this section of the boundary line: The section from Isurazi Pass northward to Diphu Pass can be demarcated along the traditional boundary line. The section from Isurazi Pass to the High Conical Peak can in principle be determined along the watershed between the Nu River, the Shweli River (otherwise called the Lungchuan River) and the Taiping River on the one side and the Nmai Hka River on the other, with the exception of the Hpimaw, Kangfang and Gawlum area which should be returned to China. Our government asked at the same time that, during the same period as Chinese troops would withdraw from the area to the west of the 1941 line, the Burmese Government should withdraw its troops from Hpimaw, Kangfang and Gawlum. Pending the final demarcation of this section, the Burmese Government might retain its administration over Hpimaw, Kangfang and Gawlum, and the Chinese Government undertook to refrain from sending Chinese troops into these places before this section would have been finally demarcated.

After the above proposal was made by our government, Chairman U Nu expressed the view that it was a fair and reasonable proposal taking account of the interests of both sides. In the joint press communique issued after the talks held between Chairman U Nu and the leading personnel of our government it was declared that the Governments of China and Burma had arrived at an understanding that from the end of November 1956, Chinese troops would withdraw from the area to the west of the 1941 line and Burmese troops would withdraw from Hpimaw, Kangfang and Gawlum, the withdrawal to be completed before the end of the year. By the end of 1956, the two governments had completed the withdrawal of troops respectively. Thus a good start was made for the settlement of the Sino-Burmese boundary question. The leading personnel of the two governments again had opportunities to continue their friendly talks on the boundary question in Rangoon in December 1956 and in Kunming in March 1957. During these talks the standpoints of the two sides were further clarified and a general agreement of views was obtained.

People of all walks of life in our country take a great interest in the settlement of the Sino-Burmese boundary question. In order to obtain views from a wider circle of our people, on behalf of the government I made a report on this question in the middle of March this year to the third plenary session of the Second National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Present at the meeting also were deputies to the National People's Congress who were in Peking at the time, members of the government and specially invited experts. At the end of March I made in Kunming another report on the question to a meeting called by the Yunnan Provincial Committee of the People's Political Consultative Conference and attended by representatives of people of all walks of life of Yunnan Province and representatives of various brother nationalities. Earnest discussions took place at these two widely represented meetings which gave the government an opportunity to listen to the opinions from different quarters and reply to relevant questions raised, thus bringing into closer agreement the views of the people of different quarters in the country on the Sino-Burmese boundary question.

Such, in brief, is what has taken place in the handling of the Sino-Burmese boundary question by our government up till the present. I should like now to say a few words on the basic policy followed by the government in dealing with this boundary question between China and Burma.

Ever since the founding of the People's Republic the policy persistently followed by our country in international affairs has been to strive for the easing of the world situation and for peaceful co-existence with all countries in the world, and particularly with our neighbours. This policy is beneficial to our country's socialist construction; it also conforms to the interests of the peoples of all countries in the world. It is precisely this basic foreign policy of peace that our government has followed in handling the Sino-Burmese boundary question.

Like so many outstanding questions existing among Asian and African countries, the question of the boundary line between China and Burma is the result of the policy of aggression carried on over the years by the imperialist powers. China and Burma have now achieved independence and are making efforts to secure a peaceful international environment so that they can engage in peaceful construction in their own countries. Together with India, China and Burma were the first to initiate the five principles of peaceful co-existence. We all treasure our national indepen-

August 1, 1957

dence and national interests and know full well that our national independence and national interests can best be safeguarded only through peaceful co-existence and friendly co-operation. However, the imperialists have never ceased exploiting the differences existing among Asian and African countries to create tension and discord among them and are trying hard to carry out again their aggressive policy of "divide and rule" against these countries. In view of all this, our government, in discussing the boundary question with the Burmese Government, has always stressed that both sides should act in a spirit of sincerity and carry out friendly negotiation in accordance with the five principles of peaceful co-existence so that a fair and reasonable settlement may be arrived at. For this will not only further consolidate and develop the friendly relations between China and Burma, but also benefit the solidarity among Asian and African countries. The stand which our government takes in solving this question is based on a desire to protect our national interests as well as promote Sino-Burmese friendship and the solidarity among Asian and African countries.

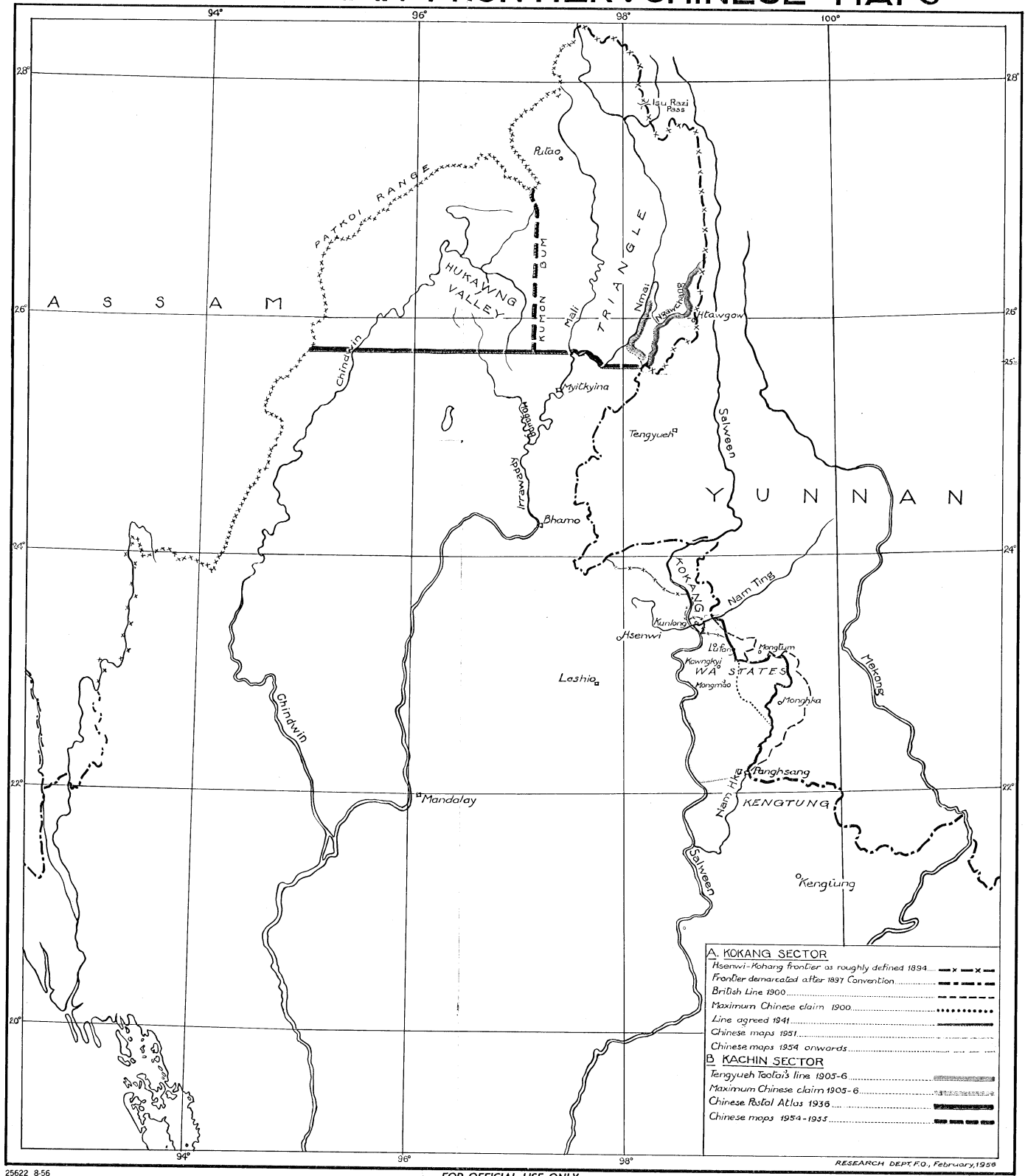
The boundary question between China and Burma has behind it a complicated historical background. Therefore, in dealing with this question, the treatment of historical data has become an important problem. In the days when China was under feudal rulers, its boundaries, like the boundaries of many other countries in the feudal era, were not too well defined. Throughout the ages the feudal dynasties in China maintained different relations, varying in nature and degree, with the nationalities living in the border areas. Therefore it is almost impossible to define the boundaries such as existed under Chinese feudal empires. Furthermore, during the past sixty years or so there have been many vastly different ways of drawing the undefined boundary between China and Burma in the maps published at home and abroad. All this cannot but cause confusion in wide circles as regards the undefined boundary between China and Burma. Our government holds that in dealing with the Sino-Burmese boundary question we must adopt a serious attitude towards historical data, we must take a correct stand and viewpoint so as to make a scientific analysis and appraisal of such data and to distinguish between the data which can be used as a legal and reasonable basis and those which have only reference value as a result of changed conditions. At the same time we must bear in mind the fundamental changes of historic importance that have taken

place in China and Burma respectively, i.e., China has cast away its semi-colonial status and Burma its colonial status and both have become independent and mutually friendly countries. The Burmese Government has succeeded to the territory formerly controlled by Britain, and the Union of Burma has been established by combining the various national autonomous states and Burma proper, while our government has taken over the territory under the jurisdiction of the Kuomintang government. In dealing with this boundary question, attention must be paid to these historical changes, and the treaties signed in the past which concern the boundary between China and Burma must be treated in accordance with general international practice. Only when we take all the above-mentioned points into account can we use historical data correctly and secure a fair and reasonable settlement of the Sino-Burmese boundary question.

The boundary question has a direct bearing on the interests of the nationalities living in compact communities on the Sino-Burmese borders. Therefore, in tackling this question we must specially take into account the interests of these nationalities. We know that the boundary line between two countries is often found dividing into two parts a nationality living in compact communities on the borders. This is the result of historical development. On the various sections of the defined boundary between China and Burma and on the borders between China and other countries we find people of the same nationality living on both sides of the boundary line. So when we solve the question of the undefined boundary line between China and Burma, we must realize beforehand that it will be hard to avoid separating the nationalities concerned by the boundary line. In view of this, it is all the more necessary for us to take measures, in consultation with the Burmese Government, to make the future defined boundary a boundary of peace and friendship, and further cement the close ties of the people of the two countries living on the borders.

Fellow Deputies! After repeated contacts and consultations the Chinese and Burmese Governments have arrived at a general agreement of views on the boundary question in a spirit of friendship and according to the five principles of peaceful co-existence. We believe that when the views of both sides on concrete problems are brought into accord through continued negotiations, the boundary question between China and Burma will receive a comprehensive, fair and reasonable settlement.

BURMA-YUNNAN FRONTIER: CHINESE MAPS



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